

THE DIALECTICS OF WAYANG IN THE WALI SONGO'S DA'WAH: QUR'AN AND HADITH PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

After Ustadz Khalid Basalamah prohibited Wayang performances in one of his lectures, public debate intensified regarding their legal status in Islamic law. Although discussions on the legality of Wayang are not new and date back to the Wali Songo era, previous studies have rarely examined the specific jurisprudential reasoning that enabled the Wali Songo to employ Wayang as a medium of da'wah within the Syafi'i framework. This study fills that gap by analyzing how the Wali Songo justified Wayang performance through the permissive opinion of al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, who allowed two-dimensional depictions of animate beings. However, over time, scholars negotiated this dialectic, enabling Wayang to be utilized as an effective medium of da'wah by the Wali Songo. This article investigates how Wali Songo justified the use of Wayang as a da'wah medium despite the prohibitive stance of the Syafi'i school. This study employs a qualitative library-research approach, using content analysis and descriptive-analytical methods. Evidence indicates that the Wali Songo likely adopted the opinion of al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, who allowed two-dimensional depictions of animate beings based on several prophetic traditions. Their position reflects a non-rigid, moderate approach that prioritizes broader public benefit (*maslahah*) when addressing communal issues, particularly in formulating effective da'wah strategies. These findings suggest that modern Islamic educators, artists, and preachers can draw

upon the Wali Songo's method as a model for integrating cultural media with Islamic ethics—emphasizing moderation, creativity, and contextual wisdom in delivering religious messages. Future research should undertake comparative jurisprudence by examining the arguments of al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr alongside other Sunni legal schools to further justify the Wali Songo's reasoning. Such studies may also explore the application of *maslahah* in the use of contemporary media as tools for Islamic *da'wah*.

Setelah Ustadz Khalid Basalamah melarang pertunjukan Wayang dalam salah satu ceramahnya, perdebatan publik semakin menguat mengenai status hukumnya dalam pandangan syariat Islam. Meskipun diskusi tentang legalitas Wayang bukanlah hal baru dan telah muncul sejak masa Wali Songo, penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya jarang menelaah secara spesifik dasar pertimbangan fikih yang memungkinkan Wali Songo menggunakan Wayang sebagai media dakwah dalam kerangka mazhab Syafi'i. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menganalisis bagaimana Wali Songo membenarkan penggunaan Wayang melalui pandangan permisif al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, yang memperbolehkan penggambaran makhluk hidup dalam bentuk dua dimensi. Seiring waktu, para ulama menegosiasikan dialektika ini, sehingga Wayang dapat dimanfaatkan secara efektif sebagai sarana dakwah oleh Wali Songo. Artikel ini menelusuri bagaimana Wali Songo membenarkan penggunaan Wayang sebagai media dakwah meskipun terdapat larangan ketat dalam mazhab Syafi'i. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis kepustakaan dengan metode analisis isi dan deskriptif-analitis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Wali Songo kemungkinan besar mengadopsi pendapat al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr yang memperbolehkan gambar dua dimensi makhluk hidup berdasarkan beberapa hadis Nabi. Pendekatan mereka mencerminkan sikap moderat dan tidak kaku yang mengutamakan kemaslahatan umum (*maslahah*) dalam menyelesaikan persoalan keagamaan, khususnya dalam merumuskan strategi dakwah yang efektif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa para pendidik, seniman, dan dai Muslim modern dapat meneladani metode Wali Songo sebagai model integrasi antara media budaya dan etika Islam—dengan menekankan moderasi, kreativitas, dan kearifan kontekstual dalam menyampaikan pesan keagamaan. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan melakukan kajian perbandingan hukum Islam dengan menelaah argumen al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr bersama mazhab-mazhab Sunni lainnya untuk memperkuat justifikasi rasional Wali Songo. Kajian lanjutan juga dapat mengeksplorasi penerapan prinsip *maslahah* dalam penggunaan media kontemporer sebagai sarana dakwah Islam.

Keywords: *da'wah* media, *maslahah*, mazhab Syafi'i, Wali Songo, Wayang

Introduction

The spread of Islam in the Nusantara (Indonesian archipelago) cannot be separated from the role of the Wali Songo, who significantly contributed to disseminating Islam throughout Java. Their efforts enabled the peaceful acceptance of Islam among local communities that had long adhered to earlier religious traditions. Historical records indicate that Islam entered the archipelago as early as the 7th century CE through Arab traders. According to Wheatley, as cited by Agus Sunyoto, these traders had established extensive commercial networks with the region long before the arrival of Islam and were known to have visited Kalingga during the reign of Rani Simha in the 7th century CE (Sunyoto, 2017). Despite this early contact, Islam did not spread widely during that period. It was only in the 15th century, through the efforts of the Wali Songo and their cultural approach to preaching, that Islam achieved widespread acceptance in the Nusantara. This success was reinforced by the emphasis of early Muslim preachers on Islamic education, which facilitated the mass conversion of local communities (Fahmi & Muqowim, 2021).

Among the cultural media used by the Wali Songo in their missionary activities was Wayang. The legal status of Wayang has recently become a topic of public debate, especially after Ustadz Khalid Basalamah issued a prohibition against its use in one of his sermons. Wilda Fizriyani notes that this prohibition served as an instructive speech act, urging his followers to avoid Wayang (Fizriyani, 2022). Historically, two major theories have developed regarding the origins of Wayang in the archipelago, particularly in Java.

The first theory argues that Wayang predates the arrival of Hindu-Buddhist influences and represents an indigenous tradition practised by ancestral communities. In this view, Wayang originally functioned as a ritual medium for communicating with ancestral spirits (Rohman et al., n.d.). When Hindu-Buddhism spread into Java, Wayang became an instrument for transmitting religious narratives drawn from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Later, when Islam entered Java, the Wali Songo adopted Wayang as a means of communicating Islamic teachings to Javanese audiences already familiar with this cultural tradition.

The second theory posits that Wayang originated from India and was introduced by Hindu-Buddhist missionaries who arrived in the Nusantara (Bakhri et al., 2019). Proponents of this perspective note that Wayang stories are derived from the Hindu epics, suggesting an external cultural origin. Additional historical accounts also record the existence of Wayang during

the reign of Prabu Jayabaya of the Kediri Kingdom (1135–1157 CE), where Wayang Beber—performances using scrolls of human-like illustrations—was already in use (Kardiyanto, 2018).

As Wayang became a medium for Islamic preaching, differing opinions emerged among the Wali Songo regarding its legality due to its figurative depictions of humans or statues. Islamic teachings, particularly within the Shafi'i school, generally prohibit the creation of images of animate beings. Several narratives describe disagreements among the Wali Songo on this issue. According to one account, Sunan Ampel rejected the use of cultural forms, including Wayang, fearing that religious teachings would later be mixed with local customs. However, Sunan Kalijaga, who frequently integrated cultural elements into his preaching, argued that Islamic teachings would not be diluted; rather, they would provide moral and spiritual substance to local cultural expressions (Ahmad, 2023).

A second version, conveyed by KH. Baha'uddin Nursalim (Gus Baha'), states that Sunan Kalijaga initially used Wayang Thengul, a form of wooden puppet tradition, in his da'wah activities. Because he was considered less knowledgeable in jurisprudence than other members of the Wali Songo, he may have been unaware of the prohibition against statues. Sunan Giri, known for his expertise in Islamic law, objected to this practice. The disagreement was eventually mediated by Sunan Kudus, who proposed transforming the three-dimensional puppets into flat figures, which would remove their resemblance to statues (Santri Gayeng, 2021).

A third account explains that Wayang originally consisted of paper sheets painted with human figures. Sunan Giri opposed this on the basis of prophetic traditions prohibiting the drawing of animate beings. To address this concern, Sunan Kalijaga proposed altering the visual form of Wayang so that it no longer resembled humans. He introduced elongated limbs, exaggerated facial features, and stylized forms inspired by both human and animal characteristics. This redesign ultimately received the approval of the Wali Songo and became the basis of the contemporary shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) form (Kardiyanto, 2018).

Based on the narratives presented, the community eventually developed the view that Sunan Kalijaga was the figure responsible for modifying the form of Wayang from earlier representations of human figures or statues into the shape recognized today. Contemporary Wayang, made from leather, is characterized by stylized features such as elongated arms, extremely narrow

waists, long noses, and facial forms that resemble animals. However, this form is not an original creation of Sunan Kalijaga; rather, these features largely follow artistic conventions found in Hindu and Buddhist sacred texts (Laki, 2021).

The Wali Songo were Islamic missionaries who spread the Shafi'i school of thought in Indonesia (Hasib, 2015; Sarwat, 2014); Hafizd et al., 2021). Within the Shafii legal tradition, the prohibition on creating images extends not only to depictions of humans and animals but also to all beings believed to possess a soul, including fictional creatures such as winged horses (Ibn Hajar Al-Haytami, n.d.; Al-Ramli, n.d.; Al-Haytami, 1987). Creatures of this sort are still not allowed to be depicted according to the Shafi'i school, the school of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), followed by the Wali Songo. Scholars of the Shafi'i school, like al-Nawawi (631-676 H.) and Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (909-974 H.), were particularly strict in their stance on visual arts depicting living beings. Al-Nawawi even outright prohibited visual arts depicting living beings, whether three-dimensional (sculpture) or two-dimensional like paintings (Yahya bin Syaraf Al-Nawawi, n.d.; Al-Haytami, 1987). In this regard, flat-shaped wayang, including those representing abstract beings that do not exist in the real world but possess heads, two hands, a body, and two legs, are also included as creatures indicating signs of being alive.

This prohibition is not unique to the Shafi'i school; other Islamic legal schools also regulate the depiction of living beings. In recent times, Salafi groups—affiliated jurisprudentially with the Hanbali school—have become especially active in campaigning against visual representations. In Indonesia, Salafi preachers such as Khalid Basalamah and Syafiq Riza Basalamah have issued fatwas declaring Wayang and other visual arts forbidden. In January 2017, banners prohibiting Wayang performances appeared in Jakarta, attributed to the Alliance of Muslim Communities of Central Jakarta, asserting that Wayang contradicts Islamic teachings. These campaigns sparked public concern and controversy. Conversely, some classical scholars, including Abu 'Ali al-Farisi and al-Qarafi, adopted more accommodating positions toward visual art, whether two- or three-dimensional.

This article therefore aims to explore the use of Wayang by the Wali Songo—particularly Sunan Kalijaga—as a tool of Islamic propagation, despite their adherence, as well as that of the Demak Sultanate, to the Shafi'i school, which maintains a strict stance regarding images of animate beings. This research is significant because it clarifies the legal dialectics surrounding Wayang from the perspectives of the Qur'an and Hadith, in which scholarly opinions differ.

Understanding this debate may help society adopt a more balanced view of Wayang as both a medium for religious propagation and education, as well as a longstanding cultural and artistic tradition.

Previous studies on Wayang have not specifically examined its legal dialectics. Anggoro (2018) explores the historical evolution of Wayang in Javanese society, from its origins in ancestor worship to its later use in Islamic propagation. Awalin (2021) analyzes Wayang as a synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic elements, noting its transformation from a ritual medium into a form of entertainment. Laki (2021) investigates societal narratives attributing the modification of Wayang to Sunan Kalijaga, although evidence indicates that its current form aligns with pre-Islamic artistic rules rooted in Indian religious traditions.

Other studies focus on Wayang as a medium of preaching. Herlyana (2013) notes that although Wayang was initially influenced by Hinduism and Animism, the Wali Songo infused it with Islamic values, transforming it into a tool for religious instruction as well as entertainment. Masroer (2015) examines the spirituality embedded in Wayang among Javanese and Sundanese communities, showing how Islamic themes became integrated with cultural expressions. Maknun (2015) analyzes the textual elements of Wayang Banjar performances and their embedded religious messages. Sungaidi (2016) discusses the da'wah strategies of the Wali Songo through Wayang, emphasizing its ethical and moral teachings. Kardiyanto (2018) highlights the prophetic values conveyed through Wayang art, while Bakhri and Hidayatullah (2019) describe the transformation of polytheistic elements—such as the Trimurti—into monotheistic teachings by the Wali Songo. Fadli (2019) explores Wayang as a creative medium for promoting tolerance in diverse Javanese communities.

Studies also address Wayang as an educational medium reflecting philosophical and moral teachings. Marsaid (2016) demonstrates the monotheistic values embedded in Wayang performances by Sunan Kalijaga, which facilitated the acceptance of Islamic teachings expressed in the Javanese language. Meanwhile, Masykur and Soleh (2023) argue that Wayang is not inherently contradictory to Islamic law, as its primary function leans toward education. Setiawan (2020) highlights the ethical and philosophical values conveyed in Wayang, which encourage virtuous behavior and discourage wrongdoing.

Given this literature, the legal dialectics of Wayang as a preaching medium of the Wali Songo—from the perspectives of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the broader fiqh tradition—remain underexplored. This gap indicates the

need and significance for further scholarly investigation.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design using library-based data, including journal articles, books, dissertations, theses, and other relevant scholarly sources (Hadi, 1987). As noted by Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative research produces descriptive data that reflect meaning, understanding, and values. Its primary orientation lies in exploring the natural characteristics of the research object rather than engaging in numerical measurement, thereby emphasizing concepts, interpretations, and contextual attributes (Kaelan, 2010).

The primary data of this study consist of Qur'anic verses and Prophetic hadiths related to Wayang, particularly those addressing the legal status of visual representations of animate beings in both two-dimensional forms (drawings, paintings) and three-dimensional forms (sculptures). The secondary data comprise classical Shafi'i fiqh texts that discuss depictions of living beings, alongside scientific journal articles, books, research reports, and fatwas issued by scholars and disseminated through reputable publications, websites, and relevant digital platforms.

Two analytical approaches are employed: content analysis and descriptive-analytical interpretation. Content analysis is applied to identify and investigate Qur'anic verses and hadiths concerning visual representations of animate beings (Muhadjir, 1996). The descriptive-analytical method is subsequently used to describe, interpret, and contextualize the findings based on classical and contemporary scholarly viewpoints. This includes assessments from Shafi'i jurists and the historical practices of the Wali Songo, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the legal and cultural dialectics surrounding Wayang as a medium of Islamic propagation.

Finding and Discussion

Wayang in the Context of the Qur'an and Hadith

The Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad do not explicitly mention wayang, as this cultural tradition did not exist during the period of revelation nor in the prophetic era. However, both sources discuss visual art forms, including two-dimensional images (such as drawings and paintings) and three-dimensional figures (such as sculptures). For instance, the Qur'an narrates that the jinn worked for Prophet Sulaiman by constructing tall

buildings and sculptures, as recorded in Surah Saba' (34:13). These sculptures were reportedly made of glass, copper, and marble, and included depictions of earlier prophets, righteous individuals, as well as animal forms. Another Qur'anic reference to sculpting appears in Surah Ali 'Imran (3:49), which recounts how Prophet Isa shaped a bird from clay and, with Allah's permission, breathed life into it.

Based on these verses, several scholars permit the creation of three-dimensional visual representations of living beings. They argue that these Qur'anic accounts remain valid and are not abrogated by later prophetic prohibitions regarding images. Abu 'Ali al-Farisi (288–377 AH), for example, interprets the term *al-mushawwirun* in the hadith “*inna asyadda al-nasi 'adzaban 'inda Allah yawma al-qiyamah al-mushawwirun*” (“Indeed, the most severely punished on the Day of Resurrection are the image-makers”) as referring specifically to the Mujassimah, a sect that attributed corporeality to Allah. Since depicting Allah as a physical body is a grave theological error, al-Farisi argues that the severe punishment mentioned in the hadith logically applies to this group, not to ordinary creators of two- or three-dimensional images (Wafi, 1968). Similarly, al-Qarafi (626–684 AH), a prominent Maliki scholar, also permits three-dimensional artistic representations of living beings (Al-Qarafi, 1995).

Conversely, other scholars argue that the previous allowances found in the Sharia of Prophet Sulaiman were abrogated by the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, which strongly prohibit the creation of images of living beings. They hold that the sculptures mentioned in Surah Saba' (34:13) were not depictions of humans, animals, or birds, but rather non-living objects such as trees, oceans, or natural scenery, making them permissible within the earlier context (Al-Shabuni, 1981).

Numerous hadiths explicitly condemn the creation of images of living beings, whether in two- or three-dimensional form. These narrations can be categorized into three primary themes. First, several hadiths describe the Prophet Muhammad's disapproval of images of living beings found on fabrics. 'A'isha narrated that when the Prophet returned from a journey and saw a curtain decorated with winged horses hanging in her home, he instructed her to remove it. In another narration, he ordered her to take down a curtain depicting birds because it reminded him of worldly matters. 'A'isha also reported that a cloth with images once covered her shelves, and when the Prophet prepared to pray facing it, he asked her to remove it. She subsequently repurposed the cloth into cushions (Al-Naysaburi, pp.158–159; Al-Bukhari, 1987). Similarly,

a narration from Anas recounts that the Prophet instructed ‘A’isha to remove a screen decorated with images because it distracted him during prayer.

Second, several hadiths state that angels do not enter a house containing images of living beings. These narrations—reported by Abu Thalhah, Salim from his father, ‘A’isha, Maymunah, and Abu Hurayrah—explain that angels refrain from entering homes where there are dogs, images, or statues (Kudhori, 2023). Therefore, scholars have generally interpreted these hadiths as a warning against the creation or possession of images that may lead to veneration or imitation of divine creation. However, many jurists distinguish between three-dimensional statues and two-dimensional illustrations, allowing the latter when used for educational, decorative, or da‘wah purposes, provided they do not promote shirk or indecency.

Third, other hadiths warn that image-makers (*al-mushawwirun*) will receive severe punishment on the Day of Judgment. Narrated by Ibn Mas‘ud, Ibn ‘Umar, ‘A’isha, Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, and Abu Juhayfah, these hadiths state that creators of images will be commanded to give life to their creations but will be unable to do so. Their punishment is described as severe because their actions imitate Allah’s creation. The narration of Ibn ‘Abbas even reports that these individuals will enter Hell, where Allah will create counterparts to the images they produced, which will then torment them. In another narration, Abu Juhayfah states that the Prophet cursed the image-makers (Kudhori, 2023).

Reflecting on these narrations, al-Nawawi explains that scholars of the Shafi‘i school classify the drawing of living beings as haram, considering it a major sin due to the explicit textual threats. This prohibition applies to images on all mediums—including clothing, wall hangings, vessels, and currency—because they mimic Allah’s act of creation. However, images of non-living objects, such as trees or objects without souls, are permitted. Al-Nawawi further notes that if an image of a living being is displayed prominently, such as on clothing or wall hangings, its use is prohibited. In contrast, if images appear on items considered trivial or degrading—such as carpets that are stepped on or cushions—they may be tolerated.

Al-Nawawi does not differentiate between two- and three-dimensional depictions of living beings, asserting that both forms are equally prohibited. He relates this ruling to the Shafi‘i school and the majority of early Muslim scholars, including the Sahabah and Tabi‘in. While some early scholars restricted the prohibition to three-dimensional images with physical depth

(*shakhs*, i.e., statues), al-Nawawi rejects this view as *batil* (invalid), citing the Prophet's objection to the images on the cloth in 'A'isha's home as evidence that two-dimensional images are also forbidden (Al-Nawawi, 1392).

Walisongo and the Prohibition of the Shafi'i School on Wayang

As discussed earlier, the Shafi'i school is among the most stringent in prohibiting visual representations of living beings, whether in two-dimensional forms—including wayang—or in three-dimensional sculptures. This absolute prohibition is strongly advocated by prominent Shafi'i authorities such as al-Nawawi (631–676 H), Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (909–974 H), Shihab al-Din al-Ramli (d. 957 H), and other scholars of the school. The Walisongo, the renowned early Islamic preachers in the Nusantara, are widely recognized as adherents of Shafi'i jurisprudence.

Historical studies indicate that during the Demak Sultanate, Raden Patah (859–923 H/1455–1518 M), who reigned from 879–923 H/1475–1518 M, implemented Islamic laws derived from Shafi'i fiqh sources. These included *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj* by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, *al-Muharrar* by al-Rafi'i (555–623 H), *Taqrib* by Abu Shuja' al-Asfahani (433–500 H), *Kifayat al-Akhyar* by Taqiyy al-Din al-Hisni (d. 829 H), *Kanz al-Raghibin* by al-Mahalli (791–864 H), *Bidayat al-Hidayah* by al-Ghazali (450–505 H), and the comparative fiqh work *Rawdat al-'Ulama'* by al-Zandawaisiti (d. 382 H) (Sarwat, 2014). Another record mentions that Raden Patah also compiled an Islamic legal text titled *Jugul Muda*, drawing heavily from Shafi'i works, such as *al-Muharrar* of al-Rafi'i, *Taqrib* of Abu Shuja', and *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj* of Ibn Hajar (Hafizd, 2021). This suggests that legal considerations regarding wayang would likely have been derived from Shafi'i legal sources.

Given the strict views of these Shafii authorities, a question arises: How did the Walisongo allow Sunan Kalijaga to use wayang kulit as a medium of *da'wah*, despite its depiction of living beings—albeit stylized and non-naturalistic in form?

The last book mentioned is a comparative fiqh work between the Hanafi and Shafii schools authored by a Hanafi scholar (Al-Zandawasayti, 2020). It is also recorded that during this period Raden Patah compiled an Islamic law manual titled *Jugul Muda*, which drew from Shafi'i fiqh works such as *Al-Muharrar fi Fiqh al-Imam al-Shafi'i* by al-Rafi'i (555–623 H / 1160–1226 M), *Taqrib* (also known as *Matn al-Ghayat wa al-Taqrib*) by Abu Shuja' al-Asfahani (433–500 H), and *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj* by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (909–974 H)

(Hafizd, 2021). This suggests that legal rulings concerning wayang were likely derived from Shafi'i sources.

As noted earlier, the Shafi'i works that served as the Walisongo's juridical references generally oppose visual depictions of living beings, whether two- or three-dimensional. This raises a central question: how did the Walisongo permit Sunan Kalijaga to use wayang kulit for preaching, when these shadow puppets portray living beings with heads, hands, and feet—albeit stylized and non-human-like forms?

Answering this question requires careful, contextualized analysis. Some researchers — for example Aron B. Laki — suggest that al-Nawawi regarded images of living beings, including wayang, as merely disliked (*makruh*), not strictly forbidden (*haram*), and thus the Walisongo tolerated their use (Laki, 2021). However, Laki's interpretation seems to be mistaken and lacks precision in understanding al-Nawawi's statements in his book *al-Minhaj Syarh Shahih Muslim bin al-Hajjaj*, where al-Nawawi explicitly prohibits images of living beings absolutely, regardless of whether they are two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Al-Nawawi's absolute prohibition on images of living beings is also affirmed in his other works, such as *Riyadh al-Shalihin* (Al-Nawawi, 1998), (Al-Nawawi, n.d.). which are summaries of *al-Muharrar* by al-Rafi'i, a reference for the Wali Songo in jurisprudence. This prohibition is also quoted by later Shafi'i scholars, such as Ibn Hajar al-Haytami in his book *al-Zawajir 'an Iqtiraf al-Kaba'ir* and Tuhfat al-Muhtaj and Syihabuddin al-Ramli in his book *Nihayat al-Muhtaj* as mentioned earlier.

There are several possibilities regarding the Wali Songo's permission of Wayang as a medium for preaching. Firstly, it could be that the Wali Songo did not follow the legal opinion of the Shafi'i school regarding Wayang. Instead, they might have followed scholars who even permitted three-dimensional images, such as Abu 'Ali al-Farisi (288-377 H.) and al-Qarafi (626-684 H.). However, concluding that the Wali Songo followed the opinions of these two scholars seems far-fetched. It is well known that the Wali Songo adhered to the Shafi'i school of thought and often referenced Shafi'i literature as the basis for their Islamic jurisprudence. Abu 'Ali al-Farisi, on the other hand, was a grammarian (*nahwu*) who leaned towards the Hanafi school and Mu'tazilism. Abd al-Fattah Isma'il Syalabi, Abu 'Ali Al-Farisi Hayatuhu Wa Makanatuhu Bayna A'Immat Al-Tafsir Al-'Arabiyyah Wa Atsaruhu Fi Al-Qira'at Wa Al-Nahwi (Jeddah: Dar al-Mathbu'at al-Haditsah, 1989), 102-104. Meanwhile, al-Qarafi was a scholar of the Maliki school. The opinions of these two scholars

regarding the legality of three-dimensional art are also not cited in Shafi'i fiqh books, which were the primary references for the Wali Songo. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Wali Songo adopted the opinions of these two scholars, whose works were likely not consulted or considered as references by the Wali Songo during that time.

Secondly, in the case of the legality of Wayang, the Wali Songo might have followed the opinion of scholars who permit drawing or painting living beings in two-dimensional form, such as the opinion of some of the Salaf scholars mentioned by al-Nawawi in his book *al-Minhaj Syarh Sahih Muslim bin al-Hajjaj* which he later evaluated as an invalid (false) opinion. Upon further investigation, it turns out that this opinion of some Salaf scholars is attributed to al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr (35-107 H.), a Tabi'in scholar and one of the seven jurists of Madinah known for his knowledge and influence. This analysis seems more plausible because al-Qasim bin Muhammad's opinion is also cited by al-Nawawi himself in his book *al-Minhaj Syarh Sahih Muslim bin al-Hajjaj*, making it more logical to assume that the Wali Songo adopted this opinion as it is recorded in the Shafi'i fiqh books that served as references for them.

Al-Qasim's opinion is at least based on two hadiths. The first is a hadith narrated by al-Bukhari from Busr bin Sa'id, from Zaid bin Khalid, from Abu Thalhah, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who said, "The Messenger of Allah said: "Angels do not enter a house in which there is a picture." Busr, the narrator of the hadith, said: "After that, Zaid fell ill, and when we visited him, there was a cloth with pictures on the door of his house. I asked 'Ubaydillah al-Khawlani, the stepson of Maymunah, the wife of the Prophet, "Did Zayd not inform us about images in the early days?" 'Ubaydillah said, "Did you not hear him say, except for images on cloth?" Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' Al-Shahih*, 216.

The second hadith is narrated by al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i, wherein it is recounted that one day 'Ubaidillah bin 'Abdillah bin 'Uthbah visited Abu Thalhah al-Ansari. At that time, Sahl bin Hunayf was with Abu Thalhah. Abu Thalhah then called someone to remove the carpet beneath him. Sahl then asked Abu Thalhah, "Why should the carpet beneath it be removed?" Abu Thalhah said: "Because there are images on the carpet. The Prophet had spoken about images, as you know." Sahl said, "Did not the Prophet say, except for images on cloth?" Abu Thalhah said, "Correct. However, this is better for me (preferred by me)." (Al-Tirmidzi, n.d.), (Al-Nasa'i, 1986). These two hadiths

indicate that what is prohibited is three-dimensional images (sculptures). These hadiths also particularize (*takhshish*) the hadiths prohibiting images of living beings absolutely, whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional. The Prophet's dislike of images of living beings found on curtains or cloth, as recorded in several hadith narrations, only indicates disapproval (*makruh tanzih*), not a prohibition (*haram*) (Al-Qaradawi, 1998).

From this, we can draw a conclusion that the Wali Songo, in formulating a ruling on a particular issue, were not rigidly bound (*jumud*) to the Shafi'i school and Shafi'i scholars alone. They were able to choose opinions based on the values of the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-sharia*) and the welfare of preaching at that time. The Wali Songo were well aware that this issue was a matter of *ijtihad*, where scholars did not agree on the ruling regarding depicting living beings in two-dimensional form. Some prohibited it, but there were also competent scholars who permitted it. The Wali Songo adopted the opinion that permits it, because this view is held by one of the *salaf* scholars, namely al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr (35-107 H.), a very influential *tabi'i* scholar whose knowledge is widely acknowledged. Al-Qasim's view appears in the Shafi'i *fiqh* literature, which was used as a reference in Wali Songo's time (Al-Nawawi, 1392). The Wali Songo knew that the Javanese people at that time really liked *wayang*, which had become an inseparable part of local culture. By making use of the people's love for *wayang*, Wali Songo transformed this art-form into an effective means of *da'wah*, allowing for the delivery of subtle Islamic values that were well accepted. This approach reflects the sensitivity of the Wali Songo to the local cultural context, so that the spread of Islam could succeed and be broadly received across the archipelago.

This is where the moderation of the Wali Songo in the jurisprudence of preaching lies, aiming for greater benefit with the success of Islamic preaching in the Nusantara. It is evident that through this *wayang* medium, the Wali Songo successfully Islamized the majority of the Nusantara population without any upheaval or bloodshed, after centuries of stagnant Islamic preaching without development and success. *Wallahu A'lam*.

Conclusion

Since the emergence of *Wayang* as a medium for preaching, intellectual dialectics arose among the Wali Songo. This divergence of views occurred because the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence, to which the Wali Songo belonged, maintains a strict position regarding visual depictions of living beings, whether

in two-dimensional forms such as Wayang, or in three-dimensional forms such as sculptures. However, despite these strict Shafi'i rulings, the Wali Songo did not adhere rigidly to the school's prohibition of Wayang. They understood that scholars differed on the permissibility of two-dimensional images, including Wayang. Several scholars prohibited such depictions absolutely, consistent with the Shafi'i position, while others permitted them. Among the permissive views was that of al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, a Tabi'in scholar and one of the seven jurists of Madinah known for his authoritative knowledge.

It is strongly indicated that the Wali Songo adopted this permissive opinion for the sake of achieving broader welfare, namely the effective success of Islamic preaching in the Nusantara. Their decision reflects a moderate approach in jurisprudence, showing flexibility and prioritizing the greater public benefit (*maslahah*) when addressing matters of religious significance. Practically, these findings suggest that modern Islamic educators, artists, and preachers can draw upon the Wali Songo's method as a model for integrating cultural media with Islamic ethics—emphasizing moderation, creativity, and contextual wisdom in delivering religious messages.

The finding that the Wali Songo strategically adopted the permissive view of al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr regarding two-dimensional depictions, despite the strict position of the Shafi'i school, offers important implications for contemporary da'wah and religious leadership. This approach provides a strong historical precedent for moderate Islam in Indonesia. It demonstrates that religious rulings may be applied with contextual flexibility when considering *maslahah* and the effective transmission of Islamic values within specific cultural settings.

Therefore, future studies should undertake a comparative analysis of al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr's arguments alongside those of other *madhahib* concerning two-dimensional images, in order to articulate more precisely the theological reasoning employed by the Wali Songo. Further research is also needed to explore how the principle of prioritizing *maslahah* for da'wah may be applied to modern media, including films, animation, and digital visual platforms, both in Indonesia and globally.

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